

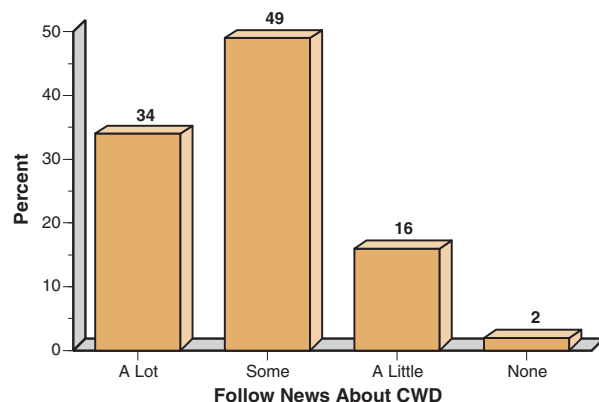
## Information About CWD

This section addresses the objectives to better understand: how landowners currently obtain their information about CWD; what additional information would they like about CWD; and their perceived trust and believability of the Wisconsin DNR when addressing CWD issues.

### Landowners' Following CWD in the News

Respondents were first asked the extent that they had been following the news about CWD. Results indicate that landowners in the DEZ continue to be interested in CWD.

**Figure 1 clearly indicates that** the majority of landowners continue to be interested in CWD: one-third of the landowners (34%) closely follow the news about CWD; almost one-half of the landowners (49%) follow "some" of the news about CWD; and less than one landowner in five (18%) is not interested in CWD (that is, s/he has been following CWD news "a little" or "not at all").



**Figure 1.** Extent that respondents have been following the news about CWD.

## Sources of Information About CWD

Respondents were presented a list of CWD information sources and asked how often they obtained information from each source. Responses were on a scale of 0 to 4, where 0 represents "never", 2 represents "sometimes", and 4 represents "often." The most frequently relied on sources for information about CWD are Madison and Milwaukee newspapers and the Wisconsin DNR landowner newsletter.

**Table 3.** Frequency of obtaining information from following sources.

News Source	Percent "Often"	Mean Score <sup>a</sup>
Madison or Milwaukee newspaper	48	2.4
Wisconsin DNR landowner newsletter	42	2.2
Television news	35	2.1
Other local newspapers	35	2.0
Friends or family	32	1.9
Radio news	28	1.8
Wisconsin DNR publications	21	1.5
Hunting/sportsmen's publications	21	1.2
Magazines or books	16	1.2
Hunting/sportsmen's clubs	14	1.0
Wisconsin DNR internet website	14	0.7
Column from Wisconsin DNR Secretary in newspaper	13	1.0
Special interest groups	10	0.8
Other internet websites	8	0.5
University of Wisconsin	6	0.6
Personal letters/telephone calls from Wisconsin DNR	6	0.5
Personal visits from Wisconsin DNR wildlife staff	6	0.5
State Department of Agriculture	4	0.5
Universities outside Wisconsin	4	0.3
Private industry	3	0.3
State Department of Health	2	0.2

<sup>a</sup> Responses were on a scale of 0 to 4, where 0 represents "never," 2 represents "sometimes," and 4 represents "often."

**Table 3 illustrates that** landowners obtain CWD information from a variety of sources. It's worth noting that a majority of the landowners did not "often" frequent a single information source. This likely underscores the availability of information from a wide variety of sources.

Almost one-half of the landowners (48%) say they "often" obtain CWD information from Madison and Milwaukee newspapers (Table 3).

Slightly more than two-fifths of the landowners (42%) rely on the Wisconsin DNR newsletter for information and about one-third of the landowners say they “often” obtain CWD information from television news (35%), from newspapers other than from Madison and Milwaukee (35%), and from friends and family (32%) (Table 3).

Landowners obtain CWD information from Wisconsin DNR publications with the same frequency that they obtain information from hunting/sportsmen’s publications (both 21%) and less than one landowner in five “often” rely on all other sources for CWD information. Perhaps surprisingly, this included the Wisconsin DNR website (14%) and the Wisconsin DNR Secretary’s newspaper column “Ask Scott” (13%). About three landowners in ten (28%) “often” obtain their CWD information from radio news reports (Table 3).

Please note that the low reliance on the “Ask Scott” column relative to landowners’ reliance on newspapers in general may in-part be explained by the frequency of the column. “Ask Scott” was only available on a monthly basis for six months to local newspapers in communities in the DEZ.

We should also note that when asked to identify the one main source of information from which they would prefer to obtain information about CWD, landowners identified: the Wisconsin DNR newsletter (25%), Madison and Milwaukee newspapers (19%), Wisconsin DNR publications (9%), the Wisconsin DNR website, the University of Wisconsin, and other local newspapers (7% each). All other sources are not more than five percent.



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## Adequate Information

Respondents were asked the extent to which they agreed or disagreed that they had enough information about numerous CWD related topics. Responses were on a scale of 1 to 7, where 1 represents “strongly disagree”, 4 represents “neither agree nor disagree”, and 7 represents “strongly agree.” In general, a majority of landowners believe that they have enough information about the history of CWD in Wisconsin and where CWD in Wisconsin has been identified but would like additional information on many other topics.

**Table 4 is evidence that** a majority of landowners say they do not have enough information on numerous CWD related topics. This is no surprise because these topics have not been definitively answered by the state. For example, the state cannot definitively answer how CWD first got to Wisconsin so it is no surprise that only 37 percent of the landowners say they have enough information about the disease’s origin (Table 4). Other topics where less than one-half of the landowners say they have adequate information include: the types of wildlife species that can have CWD (46%), precautions that landowners should take because of CWD (37%), possible human safety risks associated with CWD (36%), what causes CWD in wildlife (35%), what DATCP is doing (32%), and possible livestock health risks associated with CWD (30%) (Table 4). These results indicate that current information efforts should continue and perhaps even be heightened.

However in light of this information gap, a majority of landowners believe they have enough information on where deer with CWD have been found in Wisconsin (67%), when CWD was first identified in deer in Wisconsin (60%) and how many wild deer with CWD have been found in Wisconsin (59%) (Table 4). In addition, about one-half of the landowners believe they have enough information on what the Wisconsin DNR is doing about CWD (55%), precautions that hunters should take because of CWD (51%) and how many captive deer with CWD have been found in Wisconsin (51%) (Table 4).

**Table 4. Adequate information about CWD.**

I feel I have enough information about...	Percent "Slightly" to "Strongly" Agree	Mean Score <sup>a</sup>
...where deer with CWD have been found in Wisconsin . . . . .	67	4.8
...when CWD was first identified in deer in Wisconsin . . . . .	60	4.6
...how many wild deer with CWD have been found in Wisconsin . . . . .	59	4.5
...what the Wisconsin DNR is doing about CWD . . . . .	55	4.4
...precautions that hunters should take because of CWD . . . . .	51	4.3
...how many captive deer with CWD have been found in Wisconsin . . . . .	51	4.2
...types of wildlife species that can have CWD . . . . .	46	3.8
...precautions that landowners should take because of CWD . . . . .	37	3.7
...how CWD first got to Wisconsin . . . . .	37	3.7
...possible human safety risks associated with CWD . . . . .	36	3.6
...what causes CWD in wildlife . . . . .	35	3.6
...what DATCP is doing about CWD . . . . .	32	3.5
...possible livestock health risks associated with CWD . . . . .	30	3.4

<sup>a</sup> Responses were on a scale of 1 to 7, where 1 represents "strongly disagree," 4 represents "neither agree nor disagree," and 7 represents "strongly agree."

Each landowner was asked to indicate up to three topics (that were listed in Table 4) about which s/he would like to receive more information. To some extent, the results are as expected – they are the inverse of results found in Table 4. Information on the possible human safety risks associated with CWD is the most desired topic.

**Table 5 indicates that** a majority of landowners did not say that they need more information on any topic. However, several CWD related topics deserve increased focus. Almost one-half of the landowners (47%) want more information on the possible human safety risks associated with CWD and about two-fifths of the landowners (38%) want more information on the possible livestock health risks associated with CWD (Table 5).

About three landowners in ten would like more information on what causes CWD in wildlife (32%), the precautions that landowners should take because of CWD (30%), and the types of wildlife species that can have CWD (29%) (Table 5).

Ten percent to 25 percent of the landowners want more information on how CWD first got to Wisconsin (25%), what the Department of Agriculture is doing about CWD (18%), what the Wisconsin DNR is doing about CWD (16%), the precautions that hunters should take because of

CWD (13%), and where deer with CWD have been found in Wisconsin (10%) (Table 5).

Landowners are most satisfied with the information they have received about how many wild deer with CWD have been found in Wisconsin (9%), when CWD was first identified in deer in Wisconsin (7%), and how many captive deer with CWD have been found in Wisconsin (1%) (Table 5). These results given in Table 5 should provide the Department and the state with guidance on the content of information needed to fill the information gap presented in Table 4.

**Table 5. Percentage of landowners that would like more information about CWD related topics.**

Topic	Percent
Possible human safety risks associated with CWD . . . . .	47
Possible livestock health risks associated with CWD . . . . .	38
What causes CWD in wildlife . . . . .	32
Precautions that landowners should take because of CWD . . . . .	30
Types of wildlife species that can have CWD . . . . .	29
How CWD first got to Wisconsin . . . . .	25
What DATCP is doing about CWD . . . . .	18
What the Wisconsin DNR is doing about CWD . . . . .	16
Precautions that hunters should take because of CWD . . . . .	13
Where deer with CWD have been found in Wisconsin . . . . .	10
How many wild deer with CWD have been found in Wisconsin . . . . .	9
When CWD was first identified in deer in Wisconsin . . . . .	7
How many captive deer with CWD have been found in Wisconsin . . . . .	1

## State Information Sources

Respondents were asked if the Wisconsin Departments of Natural Resources (Wisconsin DNR), Agriculture and Consumer Protection (DATCP), and Health and Family Services (DHFS) have done enough to provide them with the information they need about CWD. Specifically, respondents were asked if they would prefer to receive from each state agency: less information, more information, or about the same amount of information they currently receive. Responses were on a 5-point scale where 1 represents “a lot less information”, 3 represents “about the same amount of information” and 5 represents “a lot more information.”

A second question asked if respondents think the state agencies have given CWD the proper amount of attention. Responses were on a 4-point scale where 1 represents “too little”, 2 represents “about right”, 3 represents “too much”, and 4 represents “unsure.” When calculating the means, the “unsure” responses were eliminated, thereby creating a 3-point scale.

**Table 6 shows that** in general, DATCP and DHFS could do more to provide CWD information to landowners. A minority of landowners would like to receive more information from the

Wisconsin DNR. The Wisconsin DNR is doing a fairly good job of providing the desired amount of information to landowners; almost one-half of the landowners (46%) say they would prefer to receive the same amount of information they currently receive and less than one-half of the landowners (45%) say they would prefer to receive more information about CWD from Wisconsin DNR. A slight majority of landowners would like to receive more information about CWD from DATCP (53%) and from DHFS (51%) (Table 6).

The comment from one focus group participant is indicative of the feeling of many others:

*I don't think you could give us enough —  
you can't give us enough stuff that's positive...  
Any information you can give us is great.*

Landowners believe the DATCP and DHFS could direct more attention to CWD. Landowners are less likely to say that about the Wisconsin DNR. Just over one-half of the landowners (54%) say the Wisconsin DNR is giving CWD the proper amount of attention. About one landowner in ten (9%) says the Wisconsin DNR is giving CWD too little attention and about three landowners in ten say DATCP (29%) and DHFS (29%) are giving CWD too little attention (Table 6).

**Table 6.** Landowners' preference for information from State agencies and perception of attention given by State agencies to CWD. (Means followed by the same letter are **not** statistically different at the  $\alpha=0.05$  level; means which are not followed by the same letter are significantly different.)

Information From Agencies	State Agency		
	DNR	DATCP	DHFS
Percentage of landowners that prefer to receive less information	9	10	12
Percentage of landowners that prefer to receive about same amount of information	46	37	37
Percentage of landowners that prefer to receive more information	45	53	51
Mean score (scale 1-5) <sup>a</sup>	3.4 A	3.6 B	3.5 AB
<b>Attention Given by Agency to CWD</b>			
Percentage of landowners who feel that there is Too Little	9	29	29
Percentage of landowners who feel that it is About Right	54	34	31
Percentage of landowners who feel that there is Too Much	26	8	8
Percentage of landowners who are Unsure	11	30	32
Mean score (scale 1-3) <sup>b</sup>	2.2 A	1.7 B	1.7 B

<sup>a</sup> Responses were on a 5-point scale where 1 represents “a lot less information,” 3 represents “about the same amount of information” and 5 represents “a lot more information.”

<sup>b</sup> Responses were on a 4-point scale where 1 represents “too little,” 2 represents “about right,” 3 represents “too much,” and 4 represents “unsure.” When calculating the means, the “unsure” responses were eliminated, thereby creating a 3-point scale.



Landowners are not as well informed about the CWD actions taken by DATCP and DHFS as they are about the Wisconsin DNR's actions. About one-third of the landowners are uninformed about CWD involvement from DATCP (30%) and from DHFS (32%). In contrast, only about one landowner in ten (11%) is uninformed about the attention CWD is receiving from the Wisconsin DNR (Table 6).

Landowners that oppose the Department's CWD management strategy are inclined to believe the Wisconsin DNR has blown the seriousness of CWD "out of proportion."

*We had been much better off if they [DNR] wouldn't have done a thing, much better off. And the deer would've been just as healthy as they are now. It's here but you just blew it out of proportion.*

*The DNR, and a lot of people thought the DNR, that they were placed in a difficult situation because the publicity about it had gotten so widespread and the alarm, which was generated by DNR themselves, was so profuse that it scared everybody. And they said, 'We've got to do something right now. Something terrible is going to happen. If we don't take some action now we're going to be blamed for having this problem evolve here.' They had to do something. And they said, 'What can we do? We eradicate them.'*

*I think that the DNR was coming on a little bit too strong... there was too much scare tactic there at first about CWD, and it really turned a lot of people off.*



## Trust and Believability of the Wisconsin DNR

Respondents were asked the extent to which they disagreed or agreed that they trust the Wisconsin DNR regarding numerous CWD related issues. Responses were on a scale of 1 to 7, where 1 represents "strongly disagree", 4 represents "neither agree nor disagree", and 7 represents "strongly agree." In general, a majority of landowners trust the Wisconsin DNR when addressing CWD, although the mean scores indicate that the degree of trust is not very high.

**Table 7.** Landowners' trust of the Wisconsin DNR when addressing CWD.

I trust the Wisconsin DNR to...	Percent "Slightly" to "Strongly" Agree	Mean Score <sup>a</sup>
Provide truthful information on the number of CWD- positive deer discovered in Wisconsin	71	5.0
Provide truthful information on how CWD spreads	66	4.8
Provide timely information on CWD issues	66	4.7
Provide the best available information on CWD in Wisconsin	65	4.7
Provide truthful information about human safety issues related to CWD	63	4.7
Provide me with enough information to decide what actions I should take regarding CWD	63	4.6
Provide adequate opportunities to listen to landowners' concerns about CWD	59	4.5
Follow the best available science in managing CWD	56	4.5
Provide truthful information about deer population estimates	56	4.4
Properly address CWD in Wisconsin	55	4.3
Make good deer management decisions regarding CWD	52	4.1

<sup>a</sup> Responses were on a scale of 1 to 7, where 1 represents "strongly disagree," 4 represents "neither agree nor disagree," and 7 represents "strongly agree."

**Table 7 explains that** although the majority of landowners say they trust the Wisconsin DNR when addressing CWD related issues, the mean scores are at the low end of the trust scale – they fall between "neither agree nor disagree" and "slightly agree."

More landowners (71%, mean score = 5.0) trust the Wisconsin DNR to provide truthful information on the number of CWD-positive deer discovered in Wisconsin than any other CWD related issue (Table 7).

Two-thirds of the landowners have some trust in the Wisconsin DNR to provide truthful information on how CWD spreads and to provide timely information on CWD issues (both 66%), and to provide the best available information on CWD in Wisconsin (65%) (Table 7).

The smallest number of landowners (though still a slight majority) trust the Wisconsin DNR to make good deer management decisions regarding CWD (52%) (Table 7).

The focus groups revealed that for some landowners, the Department's response to CWD has eroded their trust in the Department.

*I don't trust the DNR's numbers regardless of what they get. They can say five deer per square mile. They're still going to try and kill every deer and say, 'Well, maybe there are five that escaped.' I don't trust their numbers. I never was like that until CWD. I didn't have any reason to not trust and believe and support the DNR until CWD. When you look at what other states are doing, when you look at science that isn't there, what the DNR is telling you is their science... There's a lot of science that says that by killing all the deer you're killing the cure. I believe that nature heals itself. I think every time you go in you cut a limb, you break a bush, you step on a blade of grass, you kill an animal, nature is already working to grow back, survive, adapt to whatever. Way too many times the DNR or humans have come in and done things that go wrong.*

*I, for one, believe it's been here for a long time. I think that possibility exists. Nobody has proven to me that this is a newly emerging disease. There are people who are trumping up that cause and I think they do that more to promote their own ideologies and their own agendas, whether it's*

*banning baiting or feeding, or whether it's crucifying game farms. I think this is being used as a tool to promote that agenda.*

*[Do you think the Department believes that they made a mistake and they are now afraid to admit it?] I think yes, but I think it even goes further than that. There are a lot of theories out there but I believe that under the money crunch that we're in, in the political game that we play all the time, there are many, many cutbacks. [CWD] was a way to keep people employed... I can't prove that but there was a lot of money poured into this in many different aspects, all the way to the federal government. I do honestly believe that politics played a big portion of this, getting money into the Department... I've never had one admit to me they were wrong... They cannot admit that they messed up.*

*We sat in on a seminar in Dodgeville... whatever we decided over there didn't mean anything. We voted down sharpshooters. We voted down shooting at night. DNR did it anyway. It was just like we wasted two days. Everything that we strived for over there just went right out the window. Then the media got a hold of it and they said, 'This is what we decided.' Well we didn't decide that so why would I trust you now?*

For other landowners, the Wisconsin DNR is the sole source of information.

*You guys got the best information. I'm not listening to a thing except the DNR. What else can we have faith in? I mean if you don't know, boy, we're hurting.*

*I told people that I don't listen to what political science majors say about land use, but I do listen to what microbiology majors say about microbiology. And that's the thing. You guys are the ones that went to school for this, you're educated in it, you're trained in it and work in it. I mean, we all depend on you guys to come up with the answers... We look up to you guys.*

Landowners were also asked to rate the believability of the Wisconsin DNR's information about biology, human safety issues, and deer management strategies related to CWD. Responses were on a scale of 1 to 9, where 1 represents "not at all believable", 3 to 4 represents "slightly believable", 5 to 7 represents "moderately believable", and 8 to 9 represents "highly believable."

**Table 8 shows that** landowners believe the Wisconsin DNR's information about CWD since all mean scores are at or near the "moderately" believable response. However, the mean scores also indicate that a considerable minority of landowners is still suspect of the information provided by the Wisconsin DNR. This is particularly true for information about management strategies focused on CWD.

More than seven landowners in ten (72%) believe the Wisconsin DNR's biological information about CWD; about two-thirds of the landowners (65%) believe information from the Wisconsin DNR about human safety issues related to CWD; and more than one-half of the landowners (56%) believe information from the Wisconsin DNR about deer management strategies focused on CWD (Table 8).

Participants in the focus groups were asked if there was anything in Department "communications that we could be doing differently or that you might think well of or you would like to see?" Responses indicate a desire to learn how landowner participation has helped with the state's eradication goal.



*I'd like to know if anything positive happened for our participation in this? Is the DNR happy with anything we're doing? [So, how has your involvement and your support and the deer that you've been taking off of your land, how has that helped us in our eradication efforts?] Yes. There should be something in the State Journal about that. Something positive for those that helped.*

*Tell us how we've done. In the last two years, compared to two years ago, how have we done in the state? Is the DNR not satisfied, are they partially satisfied? What's your goal and where are you at?*

*Kind of like a list of what we've accomplished and where we are at.*

Participants were also asked what would have to happen for the Department to lose landowner support. Representative responses include:

*If we found out that there was bad science behind your program and that we were being hoodwinked. I mean there's plenty of things right now and people are saying all kinds of bad things, but I haven't heard any that I believe yet. But if we found out that we were being hoodwinked, and I don't think we are, but I think that would really end it.*

*If I felt that the state wasn't being honest with us... That's when I think you guys could go right down the tube...I mean, if it comes out, you know, somewhere along the line that you actually kept information from us.*

*If you back off with any of your publicity that we've got the problem in the state, we've got to keep hanging in there, yup, I would back out.*

**Table 8.** Landowners' believability of CWD information provided by the Wisconsin DNR. All of the mean scores presented in this table are statistically different from each other at the  $\alpha=0.05$  level.

Wisconsin DNR Provided Information	Percent "Moderately" or "Highly" Believable (Score 5 to 9)	Mean Score <sup>a</sup>
Biological information about CWD	72	6.2
Information about human safety issues	65	5.7
Information about deer management strategies	56	5.3

<sup>a</sup> Responses were on a scale of 1 to 9, where 1 represents "not at all believable," 3 to 4 represents "slightly believable," 5 to 7 represents "moderately believable," and 8 to 9 represents "highly believable."